Skeena Region

MANAGEMENT DIRECTION STATEMENT

March 2003

for Chickens Neck Mountain Ecological Reserve

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection
Environmental Stewardship Division

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Forward

This management direction statement for Chickens Neck Mountain Ecological Reserve provides management direction until it is revised. Ongoing consultation between Environmental Stewardship Division and First Nations may result in revisions as required. Aboriginal rights are honoured and respected within the ecological reserve.

Implementation of strategies identified in the management direction statement will be dependent on available funding and Environmental Stewardship Division priorities

Approvals:

Regional Manager
Skeena Region
Environmental Stewardship Division

Assistant Deputy Minister
Environmental Stewardship Division

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Chickens Neck Mountain Ecological Reserve

Management Direction Statement

Introduction

Purpose of the MDS

Management direction statements (MDS) provide strategic management direction for protected areas that do not have an approved management plan. Management direction statements also describe protected area values, management issues and concerns; a management strategy focused on immediate priority objectives and strategies; and, direction from other planning processes. While strategies may be identified in the MDS, the completion of all these strategies is dependent on funding and funding procedures. All development associated with these strategies is subject to the Parks and Protected Areas Branch's Impact Assessment Policy.

Context

The objective of the ecological reserve program in British Columbia is the conservation of representative and special natural ecosystems, plants and animal species, features and phenomena. Ecological reserves contribute to the maintenance of biological diversity and the protection of genetic materials. They also offer opportunities for scientific research and educational activities. In most ecological reserves, non-consumptive low-intensity uses such as nature appreciation, wildlife viewing, bird watching and photography are allowed.

The provincial government established Chickens Neck Mountain Ecological Reserve (E.R. #57) as an ecological reserve on February 6, 1975 by Order-in- Council #440/75 under the authority of the *Ecological Reserve Act.* The *Protected Areas of British Columbia Act* provided legislated status to the ecological reserve boundaries on June 29, 2000. This 680 hectare ecological reserve protects climax stands of spruce – subalpine fir forest in the Boreal White and Black Spruce (BWBS) Biogeoclimatic Zone. Climax forests are rare in this region because of the high frequency of forest fires. The ecological reserve is also within the Cassiar Ranges Ecosection. Kaska Tribal Council, Laird First Nation, Ross River Dena Council, and the Tahltan First Nation have identified Chickens Neck Mountain Ecological Reserve as being part of their traditional territory.

The ecological reserve is located on a relatively steep north-facing slope of Chickens Neck Mountain which is part of the Stikine Ranges. The ecological reserve includes some rounded sub-summits (or outliers) of Chickens Neck Mountain. Chickens Neck Mountain Ecological Reserve ranges from 760 metres to 1,512 metres in elevation. Alpine glaciers and stream erosion have not sculpted the mountain's slopes, resulting in relatively smooth, though sloping terrain. Botanists have identified four spruce-dominated forest communities on the lower slopes of the ecological reserve, with sub-alpine fir often being co-dominant or sub-dominant. The Spruce-Willow-Birch (SWB) Biogeoclimatic Zone occupies a band above the BWBS, with the Alpine Tundra (AT) Zone occupying the rounded summits.

Chickens Neck Mountain Ecological Reserve is located 53 kilometres north of Dease Lake adjacent to Highway 37. Boya Lake Park, which protects a spectacular kettle-esker glacial deposition landscape, is located 72 kilometres further north along Highway 37. Tuya Mountains Park is a relatively small

wilderness park 35 kilometres to the west that conserves rare sub glacial volcanic features. Stikine River Park, one of the "Stikine Country" protected areas, is 90 kilometres south. Other "Stikine Country" protected areas include Mount Edziza Park, Gladys Lake Ecological Reserve and Spatsizi Plateau Wilderness Park, all conserving internationally significant wildland, diverse ecosystems and fully intact, functioning predator/prey systems.

Ecological Reserve Attributes

Conservation

- Protects 0.5% of the total protected area within the poorly represented Cassiar Ranges Ecosection. About 0.63% of the Cassiar Ranges Ecosection is represented in six protected areas, and 2.5% of the protected BWBSdk1 in the Cassiar Ranges Ecosection.
- Lies within the BWBSdk1 (Boreal White and Black Spruce Zone, Dry Cool Subzone, Stikine variant [310 hectares]), SWB (Spruce Willow Birch [186 hectares]), and AT (Alpine Tundra [184 hectares]) biogeoclimatic zones.
- Protects an area with climax stands of spruce – subalpine fir forest; this type of forest is rare in this area because of the frequent forest fire disturbance regime.
- The rare plant species, whitish rush (*Juncus albescens*), blue-listed, global rank - G4, provincial rank - S2S3, may be present in the ecological reserve.

Education and Research

- Provides opportunities to conduct research of climax forest dynamics in the Boreal White and Black Spruce biogeoclimatic zone.
- Provides educational opportunities into the successional patterns of boreal spruce forests.

Commercial Business Opportunities

- Due to the sensitive nature of the ecological reserve, human use activities, except for research and limited education, should be discouraged. There are no opportunities for commercial use.

Cultural Heritage

- The Archaeological Inventory Data Centre has no records of archaeological sites within the boundaries of the ecological reserve.
- First Nations may have completed traditional use studies and, if so, these studies may provide additional information.

Significance in the Protected Areas System

- Protects a good representation of a provincially uncommon forest type, a climax spruce forest in a boreal area.
- Protects potential habitat for at least one plant species-at-risk (whitish rush).

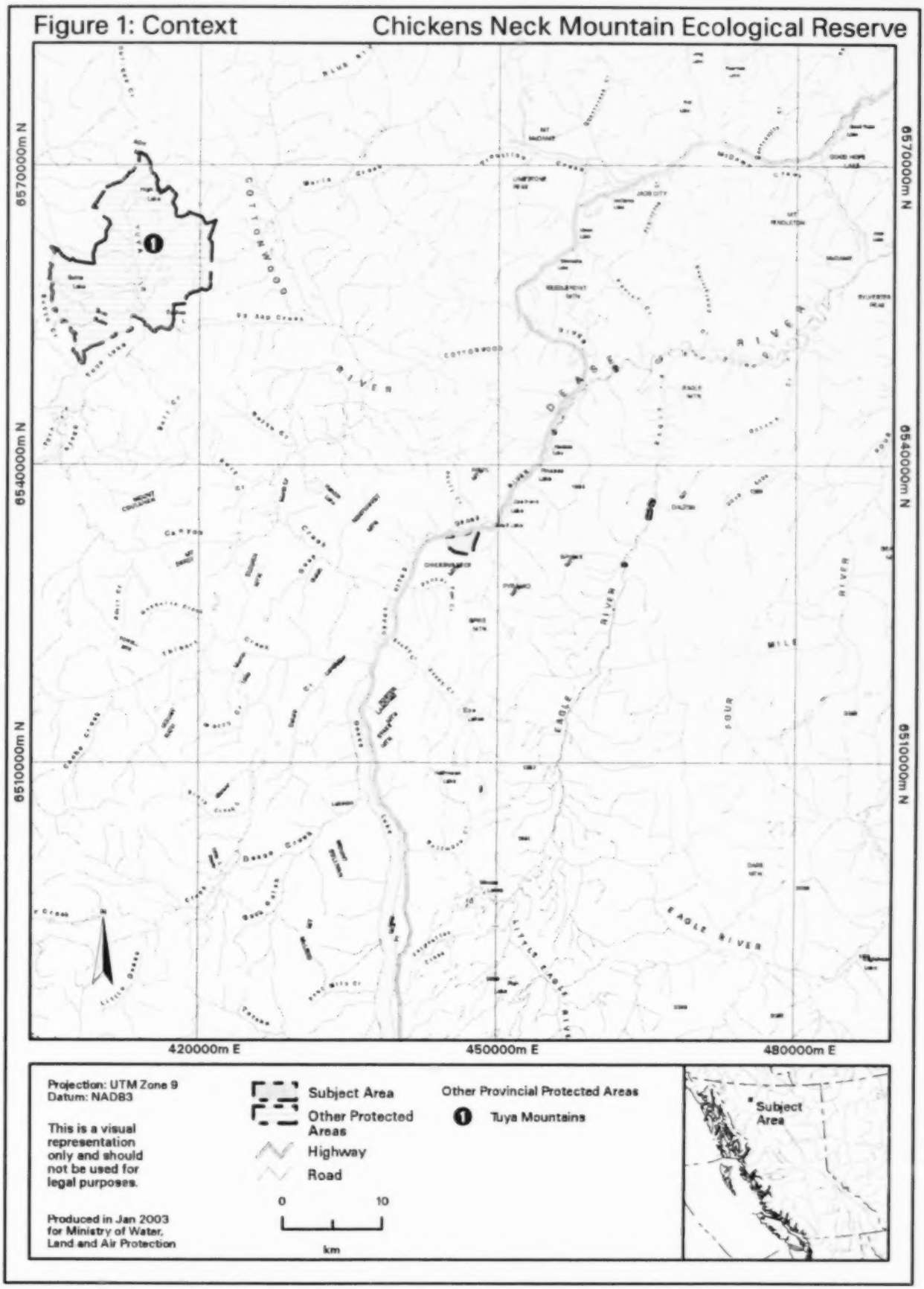


Figure 1: Context
Chickens Neck Mountain Ecological Reserve
6570000m N
6540000m N
6510000m N
420000m E
450000m E
480000m E
1
COTTONWOOD RIVER
EAGLE RIVER
Projection: UTM Zone 9
Datum: NAD83
This is a visual representation only and should not be used for legal purposes.
Produced in Jan 2003 for Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection
Subject Area
Other Protected Areas
Highway
Road
0
10
km
Other Provincial Protected Areas
1 Tuya Mountains
Subject Area

Land Uses, Tenures and Interests

Access

Chickens Neck Mountain Ecological Reserve is adjacent to Highway 37 on the east side of the highway, 53 kilometres north of Dease Lake, and two kilometres south of Joe Irwin Lake. While the ecological reserve is located beside the highway, no highway pullouts exist to assist access to the ecological reserve.

Existing Tenures, Alienations and Encumbrances

- No existing tenures, alienations or encumbrances affect the ecological reserve.

Adjacent Patterns of Land Use

- Highway 37 is adjacent to the ecological reserve; minor amounts of use or disturbance to the ecological reserve may be associated with the highway and the recreational vehicle park 2 kilometres to the north.
- The adjacent lands are mostly used for hunting, trapping and recreational activities. The area is subject to little industrial land use.

First Nations Interests

- Chickens Neck Mountain Ecological Reserve is within the asserted traditional territory of the Kaska Tribal Council, Laird First Nation, Ross River Dena Council and the Tahltan First Nation.

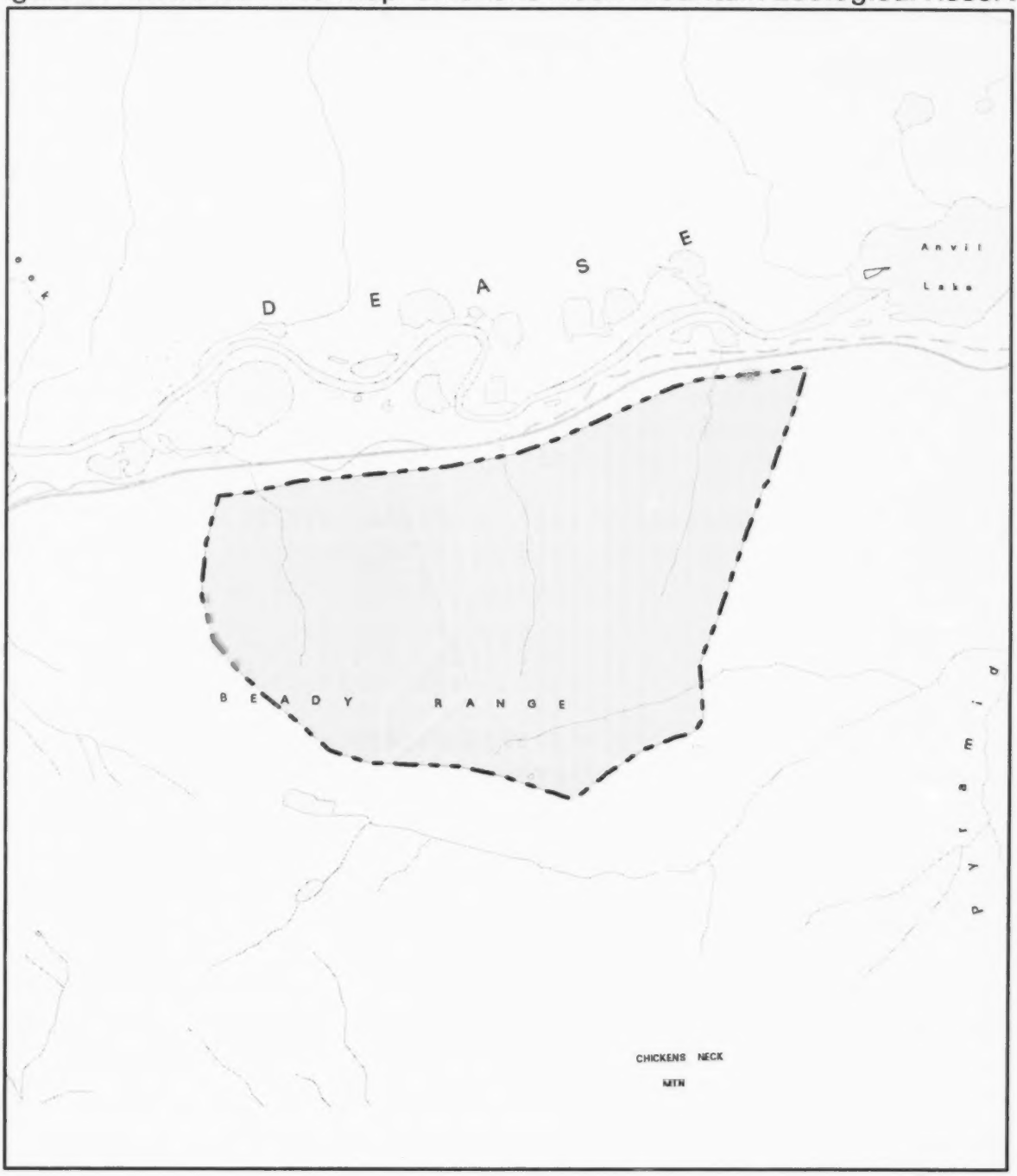
Other Agency Interests

- The Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection, Skeena Region Fish and Wildlife Science and Allocation Section, has an interest in the wildlife and rare plant species in the ecological reserve.
  - Lies within Wildlife Management Unit 6-23.
- Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management (British Columbia Conservation Data Centre (CDC)) has an interest in rare species and species at risk in the park

Private and Public Stakeholder Interests

- Residents of the region and the communities of Dease Lake, Watson Lake and Good Hope Lake have an interest in the ecological reserve because of its contribution to conservation in the region.
- Federation of British Columbia Naturalists have an interest in the ecological reserve because of its protection of significant natural features and rare plant species.
- Education and scientific research institutions have an interest in the ecological reserve because of the rare plant species and benchmark climax forest.
- Friends of Ecological Reserves have an interest in the ecological reserve because of the rare plant species and benchmark climax forest.

Figure 2: Protected Area Map Chickens Neck Mountain Ecological Reserve



Projection: UTM Zone 9
Datum: NAD83

Subject Area

0 1
km

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Role of Chickens Neck Mountain Ecological Reserve

The primary role of Chickens Neck Mountain Ecological Reserve is to protect a rare climax spruce forest in an area with high forest fire frequency. The ecological reserve performs an important secondary research and education role by providing opportunities to study the long-term successional dynamics in the Boreal White and Black Spruce Biogeoclimatic Zone.

Management Commitments and Issues

Management Direction from Previous Planning

A fire management plan from 1997 indicates that all fires in the ecological reserve will receive initial attack.

Management Issues

Theme	Issue
Protecting ecological values	• The ecological reserve's flora, fauna, and important habitats, especially species-at-risk, and rare plant species and plant communities may be threatened because of the lack of inventories and mapping. • Monitoring of the ecological reserve is lacking because the ecological reserve has no volunteer warden. • The "initial attack" policy advocated in the 1997 fire management plan may be inappropriate because of the ecological reserve's forest context and the goal of letting natural processes unfold without human interference. • Monitor any incidental recreational use and manage if negative impacts occur.
Protecting cultural values	• The ecological reserve's cultural heritage values may be at risk because an inventory of these values does not exist.
Providing ecological reserve information	• Visitors to the area may be unaware of the area's ecological reserve status because the ecological reserve's boundary is not signed.

Management Direction

Priority Management Objectives and Strategies

Objective	Strategy
To protect the ecological reserve's ecological values	• Complete an inventory of the ecological reserve's flora, fauna and important habitats. ➢ Priority must be given to species-at-risk, rare plant species and rare plant communities. ➢ Ensure that any inventory, research or educational activities do not harm these communities or the substrates they grow on. • Provide signage to notify visitors of the ecological reserve boundaries. • Recruit an ecological reserve warden for the ecological reserve to conduct yearly monitoring visits and provide site reports.

Objective	Strategy
To protect the ecological reserve's cultural heritage values	• Investigate and collect information on cultural heritage values, and work to protect these values.
To protect First Nations values	• Work cooperatively with the First Nations to build positive working relationships, and to assist in the protection of cultural heritage values and good ecological reserve management. • Seek the cooperation of pertinent First Nations to review the recent First Nation's traditional use studies for this area.
To provide information to ecological reserve's visitors	• Update the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection web site with accurate and current information about the Charlie Cole Creek Ecological Reserve. • Ensure that signage is in place to notify visitors of the area's ecological reserve status.

Consultation and Future Planning

Environmental Stewardship Division will continue to consult with all interested First Nations and other stakeholders regarding management of this ecological reserve. The Environmental Stewardship Division considers Chickens Neck Mountain Ecological Reserve low priority for the development of a management plan with full public involvement. This management direction statement will be reviewed and, if necessary, revised in five to seven years.

Appendix 1. Chickens Neck Mountain Ecological Reserve
Table of Acceptable Activities, Uses and Facilities.

Activity/Use/Facility	Acceptability
Aboriginal traditional uses and activities	Y
Hunting	N
Fishing	N
Trapping	N
Grazing (domestic livestock)	N
Recreational Gold Panning/Rock Hounding	N
Utility corridors	N
Communication Sites	N
Horse Use/ Pack Animals	N
Guide Outfitting (hunting)	N
Guide Outfitting (fishing)	N
Guide Outfitting (nature tours)	N
Guide Outfitting (river rafting)	N
Cat-Assisted Skiing	N
Ski Hills	N
Commercial Recreation (facility-based)	N
Commercial recreation (non-facility based)	N
Backcountry Huts	N
Water Control Structures	N
Fish Stocking and Enhancement	N
Road Access	N
Off-road Access (snowmobiling)	N
Off-road Access (motorized)	N
Off-road Access (mechanical activities)	N
Motorized Water Access	N
Aircraft Access	N1
Fire Management (suppression)	M
Fire Management (prescribed fire management)	N
Fire Management (prevention)	M
Forest Insect/Disease Control	N1
Noxious Weed Control	N1
Exotic Insect/Disease Control	N1
Scientific Research (specimen collection) by permit only	M
Scientific Research (manipulative activities) by permit only	M
Supervised Education and Scientific Observation by permit only	Y

Y= allowed subject to conditions identified in the management direction statement or management plan
M= may be permitted if compatible with protected area objectives
N= not allowed
N1=allowed for expressed management purposes only
N2=present and allowed to continue but not normally allowed